

**University Avenue Central Corridor Task Force Meeting**  
**13 March 2007**  
**Central Corridor Resource Center**  
**Meeting Summary**

**University Task Force members present:** Reggie Aligada (co-chair), Julie Causey (co-chair), Marilyn Porter (co-chair), Veronica Burt, Betty Charles, James Erkel, Joan Grzywinski, Seitu Jones, Richard Kleinbaum, Juan Linares, Byron Moore, Nieeta Presley, Jonathan Sage-Martinson, Robert Straughn, Anne White

**University Task Force members absent:** Courtney Henry, Vatou Her, Mai Thor, Bao Vang, Brian Winkelaar

**Staff present:** Donna Drummond, Shawntera Hardy, Va-Megn Thoj, Sarah Zorn

**Others present:** Jo Haberman, Karri Plowman, Carol Swenson, Karen Lyons, Joe Samuel, Sarah Penman, Linda Jungwirth, Andy Driscoll

The meeting was called to order by co-chair Reggie Aligada. He welcomed everyone and introductions of the task force members, City staff and audience members were made. He mentioned that the purpose of this meeting was to review and approve the proposed schedule and to continue discussions on the *Draft Central Corridor Development Strategy* (CCDS) to identify ideas or issues that needed changing or were missing entirely.

To clarify, the next meeting will take place on *Thursday* the 29<sup>th</sup> of March (the schedule said Tuesday).

Donna Drummond of PED went over the schedule and explained the process that would take place once the task force has finalized its recommendations on the *Development Strategy*. The proposed schedule suggests the task force approve its final recommendations by April 12<sup>th</sup> (however, major changes would need to be submitted to Urban Strategies immediately following the Mar. 29 meeting). On April 23<sup>rd</sup> Urban Strategies is tentatively scheduled to present the final document to both task forces, Mayor, City Council and Planning Commission. The document would then be sent to the Planning Commission for review and public hearing. The Planning Commission would formally release the document for public review and schedule a public hearing date in approximately 30 days. Based on its review and the public hearing comments, the Planning Commission will forward the document, along with its recommendations, to the Mayor and City Council. A second public hearing at the City Council is at the discretion of the Council and will be determined at a later date. In general, the Planning Commission can be expected to act on the document in early June and final adoption by the Mayor and City Council can be expected by July.

The document will then be adopted as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan and will act as a guide for the City's Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) process and development plans, and provide a framework for property owners, developers, and other private investors.

Reggie Aligada asked that Donna comment on Phase II of the process (what happens after the CCDS is adopted). She responded by stating that the CCDS is a vision and set of guiding principles but lacks implementation details. The Phase II outline is based on the CCDS and is an attempt to identify what is already underway and what areas Phase II needs to address. She further stated that the two Central Corridor task forces were created to develop recommendations for the CCDS but she recognizes that there is interest on the University task force in the interim

zoning overlay and some elements of Phase II as well. She recommended that the task force continue to meet several times to evaluate an interim ordinance prepared by city staff. However, the task force will not formally continue beyond this, and task force members can decide if they would like to remain involved in other Phase II activities and in what capacity.

The following questions were asked/statements made with responses from city staff:

- Phase II should begin at the neighborhood level, with District Councils doing small area or station area plans (which are small area plans done for areas around proposed stations). Most of the District Councils have completed their district plan updates and the next step is actually doing small area plans around station areas based on the framework provided by the CCDS. Small area plans always have a task force composed of neighborhood residents, business owners, property owners, institutions, etc. so the neighborhood is very involved in developing the plans.
- How big is the station area? Is it one block into the neighborhoods? Typically the station area is ¼ mile; the work that Urban Strategies has done will provide a foundation and help focus recommendations for these areas.
- Will the Thomas-Dale area then have to amend its small area plan to focus on the Dale-University area? Station area planning for Dale-University will look at both the small area plan done there in 2004 and the District 7 plan as a foundation.
- Will the station area task forces have an impact on the design of the station areas? The Metropolitan Council will likely be setting up subcommittees to discuss the design and siting of stations. They do want to work with the community on station design. The City will need to coordinate with the Met Council to determine how the station design process should be coordinated with the City's station area planning (which will look at development in the area around a station).
- The task force had talked about advocating for infrastructure at Western and Victoria, will there be station area planning done at those locations? Yes, the potential for development is there, but Western and Victoria are identified as 2<sup>nd</sup> priorities, given available staff resources.
- What happened to Hamline being on that list as well? The Snelling station may be close enough to Hamline; it will need to be determined whether there is demand for a station there.
- A Hamline station would be in demand because of the number of residents in the area, the new Target store and other retailers.
- Many regions talk about station areas with a ½ mile radius in terms of a market context, but that the planning for these stations is looking at a ¼ mile radius.

Reggie suggested beginning with the schedule and seeing if any changes needed to be made or if the group agreed on what had been proposed. He asked if final changes needed to be made by the 3/29 meeting. Donna responded by saying that the schedule is a suggested approach. The task force has been provided with what the Capital/Downtown task force has talked about in terms of changes to give them an idea of the scale; based on the group's discussion, a draft list of comments/revisions will be created for discussion at the next meeting.

Jim Erkel mentioned a concern about the interface between Phase I and Phase II. Donna said that any interim zoning overlay recommendation doesn't go through the Planning Commission, but rather through the City Council where it has to go through 4 readings but can be put into effect immediately by resolution. The task force will get a staff draft of the proposed overlay for discussion at the 4/12 meeting; it's possible that it will be ready for the 3/29 meeting, but it's still being worked on. A couple of members indicated that they would prefer the draft at the 3/29 meeting in a user-friendly format, without the jargon used in ordinances.

The schedule was agreed upon and a discussion of the big and small ideas and changes follows:

- The document has been taken to the District Councils and the overall comment is that it is difficult to read and frustrating to those not involved in the process. The document needs a summary or list of priorities. Donna said that the city has discussed having a 4 page summary that could be handed out once the document is finalized, but that an executive summary would be helpful now. Marilyn Porter suggested using the PowerPoint that Shawntera had presented to the Planning Commission to create a summary.
- Add names on cross streets to the market area map on page 8. The Estimated Development Potential chart (same page) doesn't read well.
- Page 1, Section 1.1. Regarding the T-REX project, it cost \$879 million for the LRT portion, has 14 stations and is a 19 mile line that opened in November of 2006. Before passengers stepped on the train, there was \$4.25 billion worth of projects along the line that had been completed, under construction, or was in permitting.
- Market conditions on Page 7. The market is not necessarily set by supply and demand, but is influenced by regulations as well; suggests toning down the free market language. Because regulation, supply and demand are all factors that influence the market, the language should not suggest that any one factor is more powerful than another.
- There is only one map in the document that shows the entire corridor (page 3), it is important to show the line in context and emphasize that it is one line rather than separating the Minneapolis and St. Paul sections.
- Regarding the TCF bank picture on page 66; suggests either no bank name or one that is more active in the community.
- Regarding the vision statement on page 11: it shouldn't necessarily come before the principles; it's very residential in nature and doesn't seem receptive to commercial uses; "The corridor as many meeting places" as a title may not be necessary because the vision is more complicated than that; add commercial aspect, building or leveraging businesses; add ideas of wealth building and gateways; incorporate the historic aspect, the Avenue has always been an established area with housing and commercial.
- There isn't a sophisticated enough discussion regarding affordable housing or mixed income housing in the document. It was explained that part of the reason for this was because the city is working on policies and solutions in the area of affordable housing; some of these ideas and principles will be explored further and filled out in Phase II. It was suggested that Tom Fulton of the Family Housing Fund be contacted regarding these issues; LISC has a list of principles regarding affordable housing on transit corridors as part of their new initiative; a Family Housing Fund report entitled Re-imagining Affordable Housing is a potential resource.
- The report doesn't give enough detail regarding what the Dale/University area can support, it simply gives an estimated number of units.
- Regarding the Midway Marketplace intensification, page 21, #31: strike the term "single purpose," it suggests that the area will always be for a single purpose; instead of saying "expand" use the term intensify or evolve.
- Page 45/46 regarding the Midway area, there isn't a larger vision about creating a sense of place or gathering space. The block is divided up without a sense of unity between blocks and a consideration about how the development will interact with the transportation network as a whole. Currently there is an overbalance of chain stores and almost no mom and pop stores – this section should indicate an opportunity to improve this balance. There should be a discussion about how traffic can be integrated in the Midway area.
- Sidebar text should face the same direction.
- On page 1, the concept of city building is very important and shouldn't be buried in the text (in 2<sup>nd</sup> to last paragraph); reorganize the paragraph to emphasize the city building idea.
- On page 6, there should be stronger implementation language regarding future station possibilities, rather than saying "preserving opportunities for future stations." Because the document is representative of the community, the language should say that stations are

wanted at the “future station” locations and they should be planned for and anticipated; the document should project the value of future stations. The other side to adding stations is cost and travel time, there may be a time when there is an opportunity for an additional station and it has to be decided which one is the most important. The “future” areas should be station-ready and be prepared for future use.

A discussion regarding the FTA’s rating system followed and it was pointed out that the Cost Effectiveness Index (CEI) is only 50% of the rating and the other part has to do with land use and how well the city is planning; better land use planning can help the rating step up from medium-low to medium-high. The FTA’s land use rating looks at the Comprehensive Plan and the city’s progress. Karen Lyons of the Metropolitan Council clarified this by stating that indeed the city has a medium-high rating in land use and a medium-low rating for the CEI, but after preliminary engineering it goes to a pass/fail on the CEI ratio. If the CEI doesn’t get to medium, the land use rating doesn’t matter because the project won’t receive funding.

- Regarding #8 and #12 on page 89, would like to see strategies for actual implementation such as specific funding sources for storefront renovations, home mortgages, etc. Recommend using tax increment financing. The cities of Denver and Portland have strategies and funding to do these things because there is support at every level for transit and improvements such as the ones suggested. The City of Saint Paul is looking at some legislative language that may make TIF easier to use for area-wide improvements by establishing a transit improvement district.
- The World Cultural Heritage District (#11 on page 89) boundary is inconsistent; some places say Lexington to Rice and others say Lexington to Marion. It was pointed out that the reason it was more condensed was because of a suggestion by Colliers that it may be easier to establish in a more concentrated area.
- There is a concern about establishing a process or culture regarding a developers interaction with the neighborhood so that residents are informed and don’t discover new proposals in the newspaper. There is a document that was done by Ryan Companies about how to engage the neighborhood, this is a possible resource. This is certainly encouraged but if a developer is operating within the confines of the regulations, there is no required pre-public notice prior to actual application to the City.
- Strengthening the language on page 14 regarding community restoration programs was suggested. It was explained that the language was written that way because it’s a topic that hasn’t been fully explored as far as how it would work or if it would be good city policy. The corridor is so diverse, making it difficult to determine who would pay into such a fund? Would it be the mom and pop stores who have to pay start up costs, use green building standards and pay into the program? Would there be unintended consequences? If it’s only directed toward large businesses, it may scare potential businesses away.
- Programs would have to have incentives (perhaps density bonuses) rather than placing an emphasis on restrictions; funds collected could be used to pay for storefronts and various other programs.

Donna asked the group to think about identifying their priorities in the CCDS, zoning code changes, etc. and what would be useful to Phase II, for the next meeting. Each task force member should come up with 3-5 priorities to discuss for the next meeting to help determine what the collective Phase II priorities are.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:05 p.m.

*Meeting summary prepared by Sarah Zorn, PED planning staff.*